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Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom congratulates president's commitment to cleaning up the Great Lakes

Lansing – State Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Norton Shores) today congratulated President George W. Bush on his commitment to cleaning up the Great Lakes.

The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced yesterday that Bush plans to ask Congress for \$45 million for Great Lakes cleanup in his 2005 budget, more than quadruple the amount in this year's budget.

“I commend President Bush for recognizing the importance of our Great Lakes,” Van Woerkom said. “Cleaning up our waterways and lakes will protect our state’s greatest natural resource and preserve this environmental treasure for all Michigan residents and our nation.”

The money would be used to start or accelerate cleanup of four to six rivers and harbors on the EPA’s “Areas of Concern” list with severe contamination.

Areas on the list in the 34th Senate District include Muskegon Lake and White Lake, both located in Muskegon County. Both lakes are awaiting sediment remediation.

Muskegon Lake priorities include remediation of contaminated sediments in the lake and tributaries, and brownfield and waterfront restoration. Priorities at White Lake include contaminated sediment remediation, and remediation of groundwater and former industrial site contamination. Habitat restoration is planned for both lakes.

Polluted sediments are the largest major source of contaminants to the Great Lakes food chain, according to the Great Lakes program. More than 2,000 miles, or 20 percent, of the shoreline are considered impaired because of sediment contamination. Advisories on fish consumption remain in place throughout the Great Lakes and many inland lakes.

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